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Johnston's car found in Eureka

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CORVALLIS — The light blue Mercedes sedan driven by missing Corvallis real estate agent Glen Johnston was abandoned outside a Eureka, Calif., motel soon after Johnston's disappearance, police say.

Portland FBI agents yesterday afternoon were on their way to the coast town about 90 miles south of the Oregon border to take fingerprints from the car's interior.

EUREKA POLICE found the locked Mercedes late Sunday night. The left rear tire was flat but there was no other sign of damage. A Red Lion Motor Inn employee told police the car had not been moved since it appeared in the employees' parking lot about two weeks ago.

Johnston, a 41-year-old former Navy lieutenant who served in Vietnam, was last seen April 13 leaving his Corvallis real estate office to show property at Agate Beach.

FBI agents were called in to investigate Johnston's possible kidnapping after a scented note saying he had been killed was mailed to the Corvallis Gazette-Times newspaper. The note threatened "death to all CIA pigs." Johnston's drivers license was attached.

HOWEVER, THE FBI has no reason to believe that he has any connection with the CIA. Portland FBI spokesman Bill Williams said yesterday.

The note's April 17 postmark from San Jose, Calif., fails to pinpoint where it was mailed. The postmark can cover a number of small communities in two counties just south of the San Francisco Bay area.

In Eureka, police Captain Murl Harpham said the Mercedes "did not appear to be ransacked." But officers left the car locked and towed it away to be held for the FBI.

ANYONE TRAVELING on foot from the motel could easily have reached the city Greyhound station three to four blocks away. "It's right down the street," Harpham said.

Two employees in the Red Lion Motor Inn accounting department searched

guest registration cards as far back as March but found no one registered under Johnston's name. No one had been registered under any name using the Mercedes license number during the week of Johnston's disappearance.

Family members had called in a psychic as a last resort to clues to Johnston's whereabouts. The psychic reportedly told them Johnston was alive somewhere between Astoria and Vancouver, Wash.

CORVALLIS POLICE detective Jack Uhdn said yesterday, "We're still looking into those possibilities." But he added that anyone without a vehicle is extremely difficult to find.

Uhdn said Johnston served as an operations officer on a U.S. navy destroyer coordinating anti-submarine warfare operations during the Vietnam War.

He moved to Corvallis eight years ago from California and worked for Lee Grant Real Estate for the past five years. Grant has said that Johnston's disappearance is "out of character."

Johnston's wife, Barbara, has been appointed conservator of his estate to avoid the "immediate danger" of repossession of Johnson's personal property and foreclosure of real estate, according to court records.